

Erin McCarthy
Public Health Committee Testimony
March 20, 2013

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

PUBLIC HEARING MARCH 20, 2013

RAISED BILL No. 6391 AAC THE PRACTICE OF ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSES.

Testimony of Erin McCarthy IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL No. 6391

Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and members of the Committee

My name is Erin McCarthy and I am a final year, Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) student at Yale University. Today, I would like to voice my support for HR 6391, and discuss its pertinence to PMHNP students and new graduates.

The healthcare system in the United States is changing dramatically. By 2014, the Affordable Care Act will provide 32.1 million individuals with benefits for mental health and/or substance use disorders. Additionally, 30.4 million citizens with pre-existing behavioral health conditions will receive benefits from federal parity protections. This means that there will be 62.5 million new patients needing services, in addition to those already being treated (Beronio, Po, Skopec, & Glied, 2013).

The tragedy in Newtown exposed the desperate need for increased accessibility to behavioral health services in America. Despite only being at the state level, implementation of RB No. 6391 would be a small step with a large impact. That is, removing the written agreement requirement for Connecticut-licensed APRNs has many positive implications, including: increasing the number of autonomous clinicians in response to the growing patient population; fostering genuine interdisciplinary collaboration and teamwork; lending support through example to other states who are also contemplating similar legislative modifications; and promoting overall progress in behavioral health and substance use treatment.

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary's (2013) definition of "collaborate" is "to work jointly with others or together, especially in an intellectual endeavor." This definition has characterized my role as a student nurse practitioner, shaped many of my successes, and will be a requisite component of my career as I transition to being a licensed provider. Despite this, I struggle with the limitations imposed by the Connecticut Nurse Practice Act, as I believe that it marginalizes the holistic role of the APRN and promotes a somewhat inflexible, coerced collaborative agreement between physicians and nurse practitioners. This sentiment is reflected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Initiative on the Future of Nursing, who "{believe} that all health professionals should practice to the full extent of their education and training, so that more patients may benefit (RWJF Initiative on the Future of Nursing, p. 96)." Collaboration, as it is currently recognized by the state of Connecticut, appears to be less a joint endeavor based on chosen partnerships, problem solving, and learning, and more a formality, which ultimately limits APRNs from practicing in the manner described by the RWJ Initiative on the Future of Nursing.

I am extremely appreciative for your time on this matter and greatly look forward to watching the exciting progress of this bill.

References

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